

CHAPTER 18

CRITICISMS ANSWERED

“And it came to pass that after we had sailed for the space of many days we did arrive at the promised land; and we went forth upon the land, and did pitch our tents; and we did call it the promised land.

* * * * *

“And it came to pass that we did find upon the land of promise, as we journeyed in the wilderness, that there were beasts in the forests of every kind, both the cow and the ox, and the ass and the horse, and the goat and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals, which were for the use of men.” (I Nephi 18: 23, 25.)

“And I did teach my people to build buildings, and to work in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious ores, which were in great abundance.” (II Nephi 5:15.)

“And there being but little timber upon the face of the land, nevertheless the people who went forth became exceeding expert in the working of cement; therefore they did build houses of cement, in the which they did dwell.

“And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and they did go forth from the land southward to the land northward, and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east.

“And the people who were in the land northward did dwell in tents, and in houses of cement, and they did suffer whatsoever tree should spring up upon the face of the land that it should grow up, that in time they might have timber to build their houses, yea, their cities, and their temples, and their synagogues, and their sanctuaries, and all manner of their buildings.” (Helaman 3:7-9.)

The foregoing quotations from the Book of Mormon are selected from among many others which might be chosen, for the following reason: At the

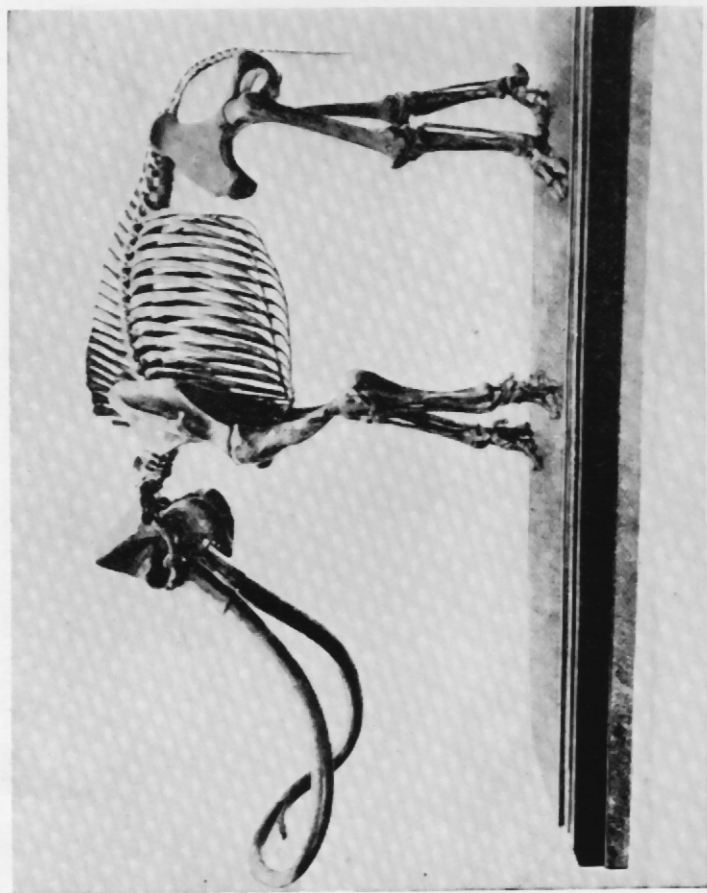
time of the publication of the first edition of the book a flood of denunciation and criticism of its contents was launched against it. Ignorant persons ridiculed, learned men declared that the book stated certain things which were very improbable, and that some said were impossibilities.

It was 'absurd, critics said, to aver that at the time of the landing of the Nephite people upon the American continent they found horses here. Everyone knew, they said, that at the time of the landing of Columbus no horses were found among the Indians, nor had geology discovered anything to justify the belief that the horse had ever existed there.

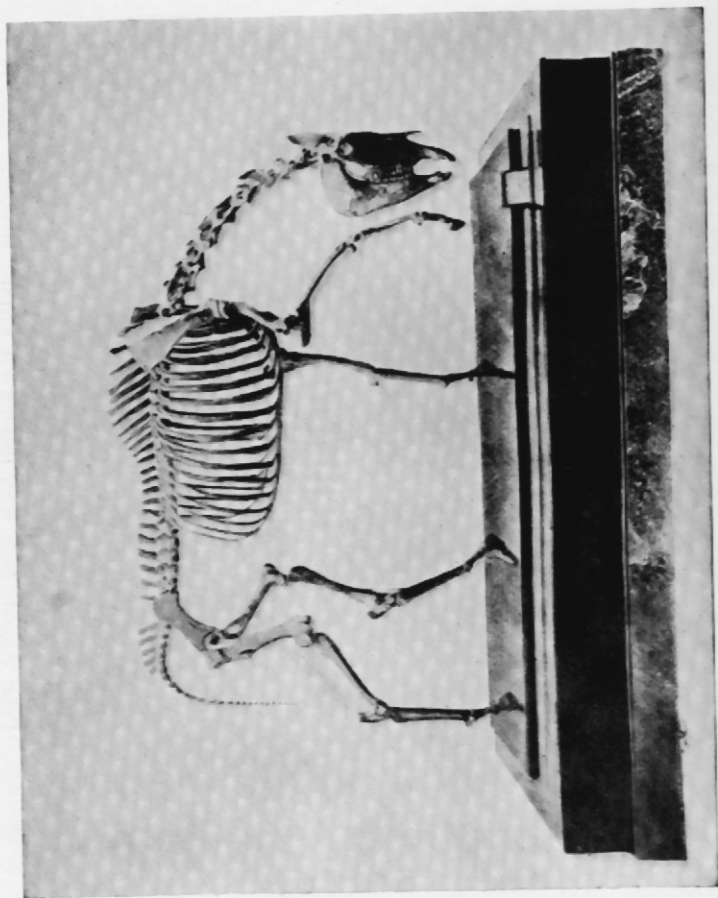
During the past century the fossil remains of the horse have been found in many parts of the United States, while the undeniable proof that horses did exist upon this continent in comparatively modern times is furnished by the discoveries recently made in the asphalt beds at the LaBrea ranch, near Los Angeles, California.

The following quotations are from the hand book published by The Museum of History, Science and Art, Department of Natural Science, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, California:

"It is remarkable that practically all the elephant remains found in the asphalt beds were taken from a single deposit known as pit No. 9, or the Elephant Pit. Here, in an area of fifteen by twenty-five feet, with an extreme depth of nearly thirty-five feet, were found bones representing not less than seventeen elephants, together with a number of mastodons, and a great quantity of bones of the Ancient Ox, Giant Sloth, Horse, Lion, Saber Toothed Tiger, Great Wolf, and Cave Bear."



SKELETON OF ELEPHANT
From Asphalt Beds with that of Pre-Historic Horse.



SKELETON OF PRE-HISTORIC HORSE
Mounted and on exhibition at Los Angeles,
From Asphalt Beds. California State Museum.

"The horse of the asphalt beds, while differing in some respects from the modern form had already reached the one-toed stage and perpetuated its genus in Asia, before extinction overtook it on this continent. The western horse is represented in the museum collection by a large number of skulls and skeletal bones, and a mounted skeleton on exhibition that shows an animal about the size of our western range horse, but with a relatively larger head."

Does not the above justify the statement made in the Book of Mormon that horses existed upon this continent two thousand five hundred years ago? We are told that the Jaredite people, who landed on the continent of North America more than one thousand years before the Nephites, possessed horses.

"And they had also horses, and asses, and there were elephants, and cureloms and cumoms; all of which were especially useful unto man, and more especially the elephants, and cureloms and cumoms." (Ether 9:19.)

It cannot be asserted that Joseph Smith had knowledge that these animals existed upon the American continent at the time of the publication of the Book of Mormon, except as he found it written on the plates from which the contents of the book were translated. The extinction of a species is no evidence that it had never existed.

It is a well known fact that at the time the Utah pioneers crossed the great plains, from the Missouri river to the Rocky mountains great herds of buffalo, some of them numbering thousands, were encountered. Had protection not been provided by man not a single representative would be in existence at the

present time, the species would have disappeared in less than a century.

During the life of the writer the American passenger pigeon existed throughout the middle western states in countless numbers. A few years ago one of our sporting magazines offered a large reward to any person who would discover a single specimen or nest of this once famous bird. The reward was not claimed. The American passenger pigeon had become extinct.

Nephi tells us that he taught his people to build buildings and to work in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of precious ores which were in great abundance. It was absurd, critics said, to aver that these people understood the manufacture and use of iron and steel. Steel was unknown, they said, at the period referred to—about six hundred years before the birth of Christ.

Nearly a century had elapsed. Archaeologists had continued their studies in Mexico, Central America, and the United States, but no iron implement had been discovered. Gold and silver had been found in great quantities. Again the critic said:

"Joseph was mistaken. The ancient Americans knew nothing of the use of steel." The Church said: "Wait; Joseph Smith was not mistaken. Science will yet vindicate him."

In the January 1927 issue of "World's Work" an article appears written by Hyatt Verrill, one of the foremost scientists, from which the following is copied:

THE POMPEII OF ANCIENT AMERICA
A VAST SETTLEMENT DESTROYED CENTURIES BEFORE
CHRIST

By A. Hyatt Verrill

"We believe that this article stands unique among accounts of modern archaeological discoveries. It is the story of an American city which flourished and probably was destroyed by a volcano centuries before Pompeii existed. We are finding that America is not so young after all. Moreover the veteran explorer for the Museum of the American Indian, who discovered this ancient city, and who writes the article, believed that he has made another most interesting discovery—that steel implements were used in America centuries ago—a theory which was scoffed at until iron was found in Tut-Ankh-Amon's tomb in Egypt, dating back to about 1350 B. C.

"Although the prehistoric graves, or guacas of Panama have been known since the time of the Spanish conquest, and have yielded thousands of pieces of pottery and stone artifacts and innumerable gold ornaments, yet, strange as it may seem, no scientific investigation of these archaeological remains has ever been undertaken until the last year. The results of the first six months' work, carried on by the author in the interest of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye foundation, of New York, have proved absolutely astounding, wholly unexpected, and of such scientific value and interest that, as one of our foremost authorities expressed it, the discoveries have written a new history of Central American archaeology."

Verrill says:

"I am thoroughly convinced that these people, as well as many other historic races, possessed iron and steel tools, and I do not know a single fact to disprove this. The fact that no iron or steel tools have been found proves nothing. Iron is the most perishable of all metals, and except under most unusual or peculiar conditions all traces of small iron or steel tools would disappear completely in a few centuries.

"No doubt archaeologists will scoff at this theory, and pooh-pooh the idea, but scientists as well as laymen have a habit of scoffing at everything until proof is forthcoming to place them in the wrong.

"The discovery of a steel or tempered iron dagger in King Tut-ankh-Amon's coffin is a case in point. Despite hundreds, thousands of ancient mummies which have been discovered, this was the first iron weapon found. We must now admit that the Egyptians of King Tut's time used hardened iron or steel, and yet until definite proof of this was forthcoming archaeologists would not have admitted the possibility.

"If in a country like Egypt, where flowers are perfectly preserved in burials thousands of years old, only one iron implement has been discovered, what chances of finding iron tools would we have in a tropical land, where burials were in the earth? Indeed, less than two years ago I was scoffed at for the suggestion that an entirely new and unknown culture of great antiquity had existed in Panama, but we now have undeniable proofs of the fact.

"Moreover, at a depth of five and one-half feet below the surface, at the temple site, among broken pottery and embedded in semi-carbonized charcoal, I found a steel or hardened iron implement. The greater part is almost completely destroyed by corrosion, but the chisel-shaped end is in good condition. It is so hard that it is scarcely touched by a file, and will scratch glass, and with such an implement it would be a simple matter to cut and carve the hardest stone.

"No doubt that many will discredit this, but how can they explain the evidence of tool marks on much of the work? Not the irregular indentations which might, and very likely were, made by pecking with a stone hammer, but clearly cut, delicate lines and chisel work." (World's Work, Jan., 1927.)

"And the people who were in the land northward did dwell in tents, and in houses of cement." (Helaman 3:9.)

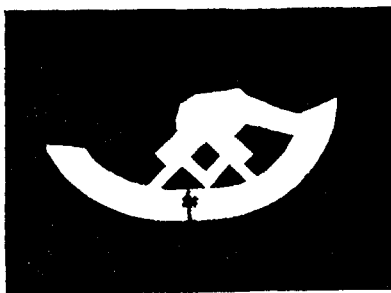
As Hernando Cortez and his conquistadors marched into the valley of Mexico in 1520, they passed near a great valley at present known as the valley of San Juan Teoti-hua-can. In the midst of this broad, flat valley were two large cone-shaped hills covered with trees and native shrubs, which resembled the craters of extinct volcanoes. For three centuries these miniature mountains stood unmolested, except as the people who made their homes in the valley went to

them and hauled away the stone and blocks of cement which were scattered about to build their humble dwellings.

It was then discovered that these mountains were pyramids which had been built by human hands. The Mexican government immediately took possession and began the restoration of these two great structures, which are now known as the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon.

The interior of the Pyramid of the Sun consists of a solid mass of sun dried brick or adobe, the base covering an area of slightly more than ten acres. It is laid off square to the points of the compass. The base is 751x721 feet, and it rises to a height of 216 feet. In a recent published article by a visitor he says:

"Among other interesting articles which have been collected at the Pyramid of the Sun is a stone which bears a large engraving of the square and compass, much as it appears on the Masonic button."



Square, Compass and Protractor engraved upon a Sea Shell. Discovered at the Ruin of the Casa Grande, Arizona. Said to have originated about 1800 years ago.

The sun-dried bricks were covered on the outside with a layer of cement, held in place by large stones which were used as binders.

On the west side is a wide stairway, the steps of which are of cement. In some places the steps have been cracked and broken by the elements and the roots of trees, but others are as smooth and firm as when they were laid.

Standing upon the pyramid and looking over the valley numberless smaller hills covered with growth are visible. Where these have been uncovered they prove to be the former homes of the people who occupied the valley.

The remains of the cement walls of these homes are still in many instances visible. The cement floors are smooth and perfect. The steps which go down to the basements below are of cement. The bases of the columns which supported the roofs are plainly visible. The cement pipes, which carried the water into the houses, and the waste-pipes, are still in place.

As the writer contemplated and studied these structures he said:

"Certainly no person can visit this spot and go away doubting that the builders of these great monuments had become expert in the use of cement."

"And now in the two hundred and first year there began to be those among them who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world. And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them." (IV Nephi 1:24.)

From the Literary Digest, October 24th, 1925,
we quote as follows:

"NEW LIGHT OF MOUND BUILDERS"

"The prehistoric mound builders are in the news again."

"Near the town of Bainbridge in Southern Ohio, excavators have discovered what is probably the most remarkable tomb of this vanished race that has ever come to light, writes Dr. E. E. Free, editor of the Scientific American, in the New York Times."

"In it lie," he tells us, "the skeletons of four persons, evidently nobles, or chieftains of distinction. Two of these skeletons wear helmets of hammered copper, among the most precious of all objects to the warriors of the Mound Builders day."

"Fragments of cloth also have been found in the tombs, an experience extremely rare in uncovering such burials."

"There are ornaments of silver and tortoise shell, as well as some composed of bears' teeth, a prehistoric fore-runner of the familiar elk's tooth of today."

"Most remarkable of all, the Bainbridge graves contain a great profusion of pearls, some of them reported to be as much as a half-inch in diameter. Evidently the great men who were buried here so many centuries ago went to their graves surrounded by all the greatest gifts which their compatriots could provide. Even from the partial preliminary account of the burial which has been published so far, it is apparent that American historical science has been enriched by a discovery of high interest and importance."

The *Courier-Journal* in its issue of November 1, 1925, devotes an entire page, profusely illustrated, to a discussion of the above discovery. The illustrations show the four skeletons which were unearthed, standing in an upright position, as they appear to have been interred. Also the face of a man cut in stone, of which the writer says:

"Amazingly well done carving unearthed in the royal burial mound and believed by archaeologists to be one of the kings whose pearl-covered skeletons were found."

From the headlines of the story the following is quoted:

"America's ancient kings and their bushels of pearls."

"Newest remarkable discovery about the prehistoric people who built the huge earthen mounds and buried their kings in robes of precious stones."

"Skeletons of a prehistoric royal family that ruled the mysterious people who built the mound near Chillicothe, Ohio, where they were recently discovered. They were surrounded by bushels of pearls, which evidently formed their burial robes."

"Surrounded by bushels of pearls, some of them as large as hickory nuts, skeletons, believed to be those of a royal family of the prehistoric Mound Builders, have been dug out of the largest of the great Seip group of mounds not far from Chillicothe, Ohio. That ancient mound is 680 feet long and 160 feet wide, and 28 feet high.

"Archaeologists have undertaken the task of exploring it by excavation. It is estimated that the skeletons may be anywhere from one thousand to two thousand years old. Two of them wore copper helmets, and one of the skulls was provided with a copper nose."

In one Ohio mound a few years ago were found enough pearls to fill a gallon measure, in size from a millet seed, to two-thirds of an inch in diameter. There have been many such finds, one mound yielding two bushel of pearls. From another 500,000 were obtained.

Was it a mere coincidence that Joseph Smith did not say that these people possessed diamonds or rubies, or sapphires in abundance? The word pearls was written upon the plates, he translated the word as it was written. After the passing of a century he is again vindicated.

I

AN INTERESTING STUDY IN DATES

In the June number of the *Popular Science Monthly*, 1930, a profusely illustrated article appears from which the following is copied:

"NEW CLUES TO THE MAYAN RIDDLE

By Michael Mok

"With records cut in imperishable stone, the Mayas suddenly make their first appearance upon the historical scene on August 6, 613, B. C. On that day—the oldest date in American history—they put into operation a workable and astonishingly accurate calendar system which has been the marvel of the scientific world since it was deciphered. Why on August 6, 613 B. C.? Where were the Mayas on August 5th? Had they tilled the soil, developed their wonderful astronomy and admirable architecture, pursued their other arts and sciences on this continent before they carved that first inscription? If so, for how long? If not, whence did they come?

"Although the Mayan day count was not put into operation until August 6, 613 B. C., the Mayas projected time back to a date corresponding to October 14, 3373 B. C., which they considered the beginning of the world.

"So accurate was their calendar that from the time it was put into actual use until A. D. 1561, when fanatical Spaniards destroyed most of the books and chronicles of the Mayan Empire, it did not err to the extent of a single day. The old Julian calendar which was used in Southern Europe until 1582, and in Russia until a few years ago, made the year 12 minutes too long and accumulated an error of 11 days in less than 2000 years.

"The ancient Mayan calendar, Dr. Spinden told me the other day, could have run for 300,000 years before it would have accumulated an error of one day. Our present calendar will run only 3300 years before it gets to be a day wrong."

Any person who is familiar with the contents of the Book of Mormon knows that the Nephite people

began to count time from the time they left Jerusalem, until the birth of Christ, as shown by the following quotations:

"Now it came to pass that the ninety and first year had passed away and it was six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem; and it was in the year that Lachoneus was the chief judge and the governor over the land." (Book of Mormon, p. 399.)

"Behold, I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name.

"And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his coming; for behold, there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day." (Book of Mormon, p. 393:2, 3.)

"And six hundred years had passed away since Lehi left Jerusalem.

"And nine years had passed away from the time when the sign was given, which was spoken of by the prophets, that Christ should come into the world.

"Now the Nephites began to reckon their time from this period when the sign was given, or from the coming of Christ." (Book of Mormon, p. 402:6-8.)